

"foreign people" in the perception of German scientists during the First World War: The Muslims of Russia as an object of study

Gilyazov I.

Kazan Federal University, 420008, Kremlevskaya 18, Kazan, Russia

Abstract

The term "foreign people" ("fremde Völker") was used by Wilhelm Doegen after World War I, primarily to refer to the Tartar Muslim prisoners-of-war from the armies of the Entente who were used as objects of German propaganda during that military conflict. The politicians and the military had their own specific purposes for the Muslims: they intended to use them in an armed clash against England, France and Russia. At the same time, German academics had their own plans: to study this concentration of the representatives of "the exotic world" held on German territory to advance their scientific knowledge. The opportunity to study the Tartar Muslim population represented a rare opportunity northern European academia at that time, as at the beginning of the twentieth century contact with Muslims from the far eastern reaches of Russia was rare, and there was very little detailed knowledge the multiethnic and multi-confessional aspects of Russia. World War I offered German academics a chance to carry out "field" research among the prisoners of war held at the two "propaganda" camps near Berlin. Linguists, musicologists, anthropologists, ethnographers, legists and folklorists worked with the prisoners, and this unusual study resulted in many important publications on topics that were seriously underrepresented in European Humanities at that time. Wilhelm Doegen, Gotthold Weil, Georg Schünemann were among the academics working with these prisoners. G. Weil published a small but very important article called *Die Tataren* immediately after the end of the war, and later he published a book called *Tatarische Texte*. Thus, the war quite unexpectedly gave a stimulus to new trends in European anthropology.

Keywords

Islam, Muslims, POW camps, Prisoners of war, Tatars, World War I